

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 18, 2006

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon, Room 3E880
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

Recent press reports indicate the Department of Defense plans to request Congress to cut the end-strength of the Army National Guard by almost 17,000 personnel and the Air National Guard by an unspecified number in the Fiscal Year 2007 defense budget. We strongly oppose these recommendations.

The National Guard is a dual-purpose force that has demonstrated its inherent value to the security of the nation in response to overseas threats and domestic disasters. The success of the U.S. Total Force strategy has been demonstrated in Iraq, where the National Guard contributed almost 40 percent of the troops on the ground. At the same time, the National Guard's response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated the value of the National Guard's paramount mission to support civilian authorities, defend the homeland, and respond to emergencies at home.

The proposed cuts are not cost-effective and a simple cost-benefit analysis of the value of a properly equipped National Guard will show that the Guard provides more for less. The National Guard brings a higher level of capability for each dollar of investment because the force leverages the special skills and expertise that Guard personnel maintain in their civilian professions.

We will oppose end-strength cuts to the National Guard in order to ensure the Guard maintains the robust capability needed to respond to crises at home, fight and win the war on terror abroad, and utilize scarce resources and dollars effectively. We look forward to discussing this important issue with you in the near future.



CHRISTOPHER S. BOND
Co-Chair, National Guard Caucus
United States Senate

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
Co-Chair, National Guard Caucus
United States Senate